

A CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY OF THE SITE OF THE PROPOSED
NAVASOTA RECREATION CENTER IN
SOUTHWESTERN GRIMES COUNTY, TEXAS

Antiquities Permit 2832

by

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A CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY OF THE SITE OF THE PROPOSED
NAVASOTA RECREATION CENTER IN
SOUTHWESTERN GRIMES COUNTY, TEXAS

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Project Number 02-06

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ABSTRACT

Brazos Valley Research Associates (BVRA) conducted a cultural resources survey of a three acre tract in the city limits of Navasota, Texas in April of 2002 under Texas Antiquities Permit Number 2832. This work was performed under the supervision of William E. Moore and Roger G. Moore and was sponsored by the City of Navasota. Two historic standing structures are present in the project area. They are a Band Hall (41GM407) and a Bath House and Pool (41GM408). These buildings are part of a greater historic landscape created in the 1930s by the Works Progress Administration. The Band Hall (41GM407) is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Therefore, any planned modifications to this structure must follow the recommendations of the Texas Historical Commission, History Programs Division. The Bath House and Pool (41GM408) is not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is recommended that modifications to this structure be allowed to proceed as planned.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank everyone whose cooperation made the completion of this project possible, especially David R. Pippin, Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Navasota, and Eva M. Read-Warden, Associate Principal at The Arkitex Studios, Inc. in College Station and Architect for the Navasota Recreation Center project. The fieldwork was conducted with the assistance of Roger G. Moore (Project Archaeologist) and Lili Lyddon (Photographer). Adrienne Mraz, Research Assistant at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) in Austin, Texas, performed the literature search. The draft report was submitted to the Texas Historical Commission for review, and the review process was carried out by Debra L. Beene of the Archeology Division, Peter Ketter of the History Programs Division, and Linda Roark with the Division of Architecture. Lili Lyddon of L.L. Technical Services in North Zulch, Texas, drafted the figures.

I am especially grateful to the following residents of Navasota who helped provide historic documentation concerning the two historic sites in the project area. They are Charles Allphin (class of 1949); Muriel Moody Bingham (class of 1945); Nancy Bouliane, Librarian at Navasota High School (class of 1968); Lillian Roan Fuqua (class of 1945); Roy Elliott Goodwin (class of 1937); Marcus Mallard, local historian (class of 1954); Amy Purcell Powell (class of 1950); Eloise Scrivener, Navasota Independent School District Secretary; John C. Webb, former Navasota Independent School District Superintendent; and Robert H. Whitten (class of 1936).

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Navasota intends to remodel two buildings on a three acre tract of land that overlooks Cedar Creek in the approximate center of town in order to have a local recreation center (Figure 1). The two standing structures on the property were both constructed by New Deal work projects started by the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration in the 1930s.

The two buildings are identified in this report as the Band Hall at 200 Brule Street (41GM407) and the Bath House at 302 Brule Street (41GM408). Appendix I contains photographs of the Band Hall, and Appendix II contains photographs of the Bath House. Adjacent to the Bath House is a swimming pool that is in use during the summer months. Renovations are planned for both buildings. The Band Hall will be completely redone with changes made to the interior and exterior. On the outside, stucco will be added to the rough stone above the sill area. It is believed that this was the intent of the original builders; however, it was never carried out. Figure 7 in Appendix I depicts a close-up of the front elevation of the Band Hall showing the finished rock below the windowsill and the scored rock above the windowsill. On the inside, 7288 square feet will be affected by the planned improvements. Only the second floor of the Bath House will be renovated (2894 square feet). This area was altered when the original roof was removed and the second floor added in the 1960s. The stairs on the outside are not original and considered to be unsafe. They will be replaced, and a wheel chair lift will be added. Additional improvements include a courtyard, eighteen parking spaces, program signs, landscaping, irrigation, and area lighting (City of Navasota 2001:4-5). Figure 2 depicts the areas of proposed new construction outside the buildings. The area to be examined is located on a hill overlooking Cedar Creek between 30 and 60 meters to the northwest.

Grimes County is an area that contains significant archaeological sites, both prehistoric and historic. This area has been the subject of several major cultural resources investigations such as the Millican Project, Navasota River Basin in Grimes and four other counties. Because of the archaeological potential of the project area, a cultural resources survey and clearance from the Texas Historical Commission was requested by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in a letter from Tim Hogsett, CPRP to the Honorable Mayor Patricia M. Gruner of Navasota dated March 15, 2002. In order to comply with this request, the City of Navasota contracted with Brazos Valley Research Associates (BVRA) to conduct the cultural resources survey. The project number for the recreation center is 51-00041, and the BVRA project number is 02-06.

Topographic coverage of the project area is provided by the Navasota 7.5' topographic quadrangle dated 1958 and photorevised 1989 (Figure 3).

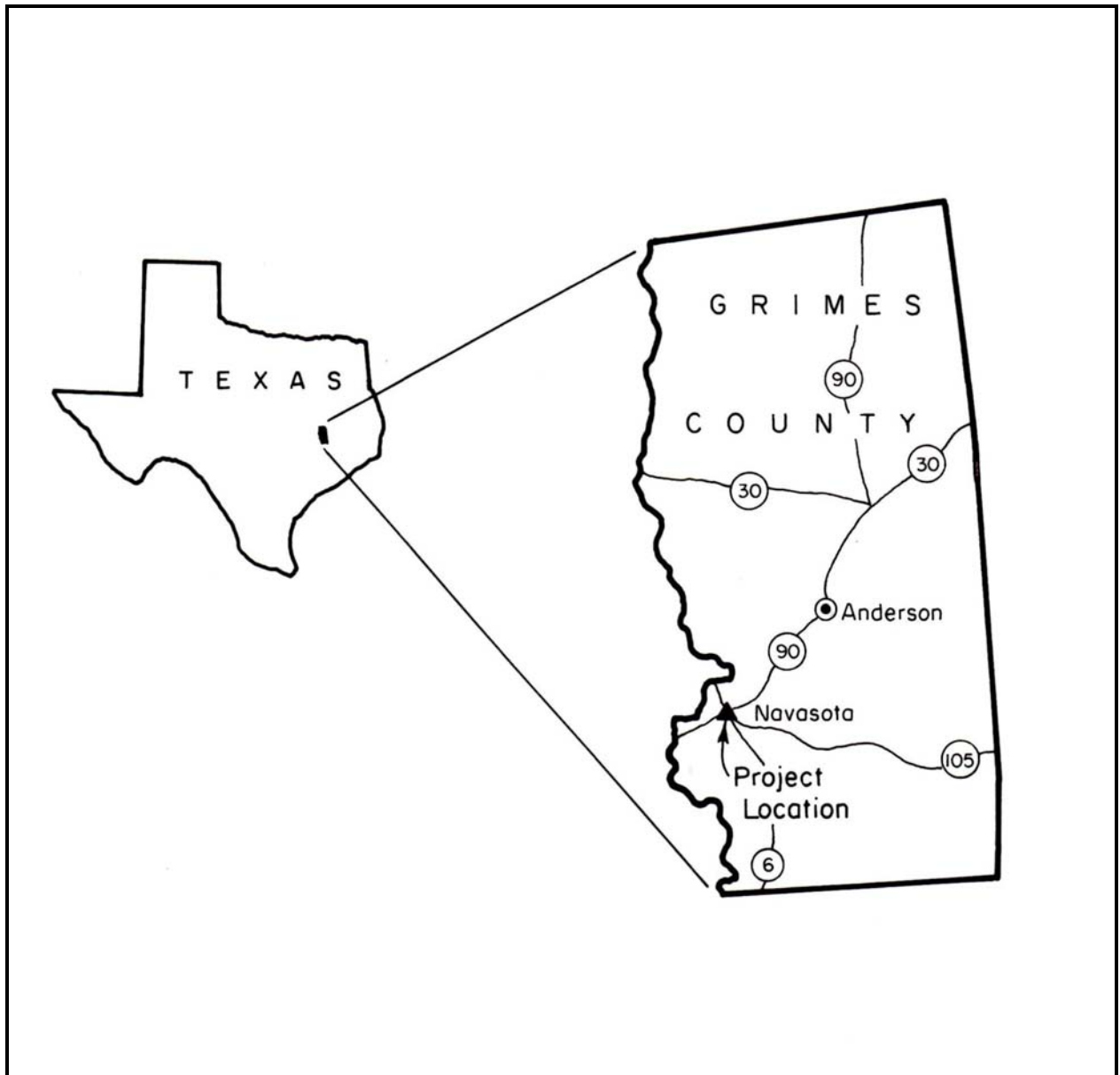


Figure 1. General Location Map

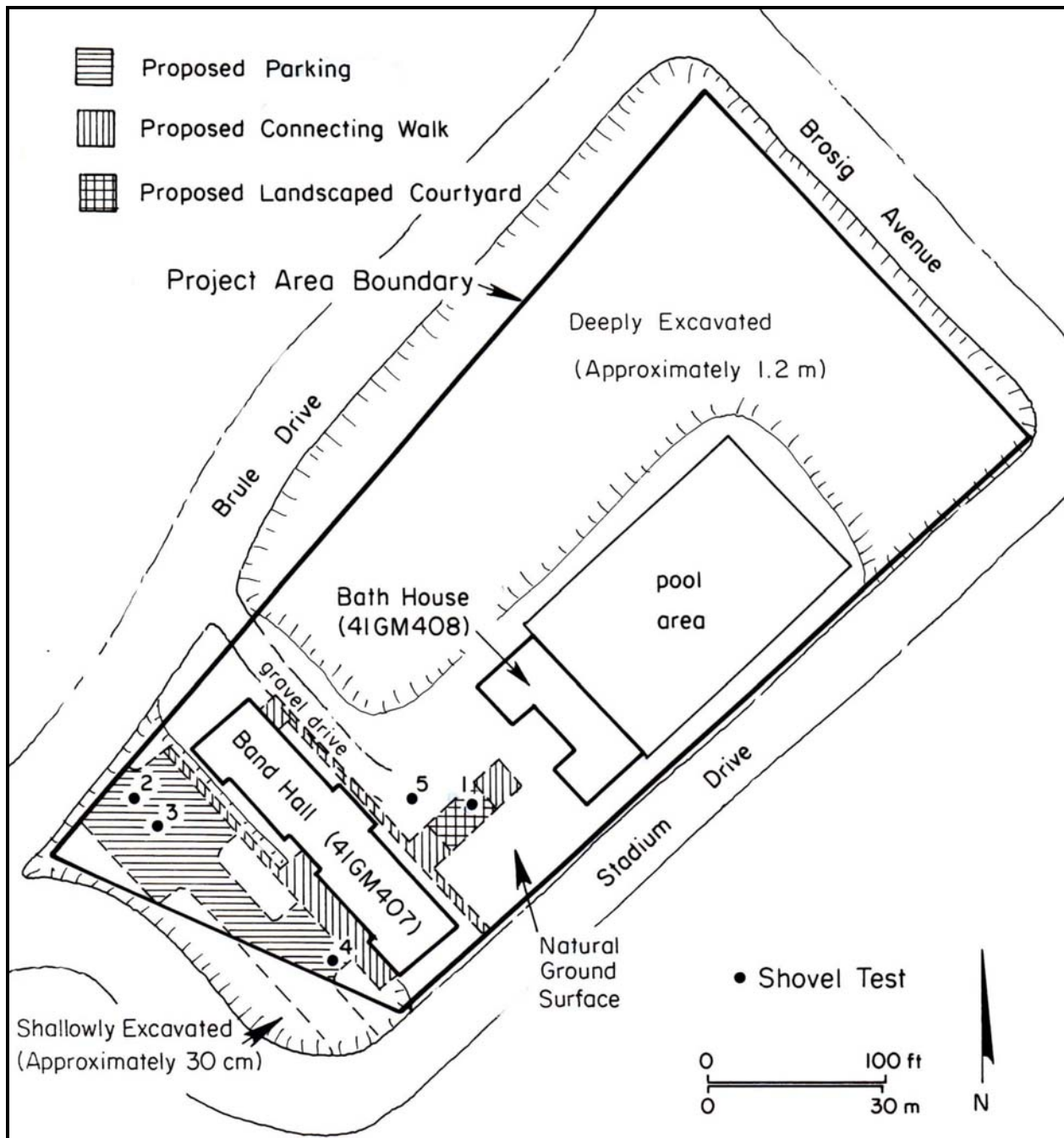


Figure 2. Project Area Map

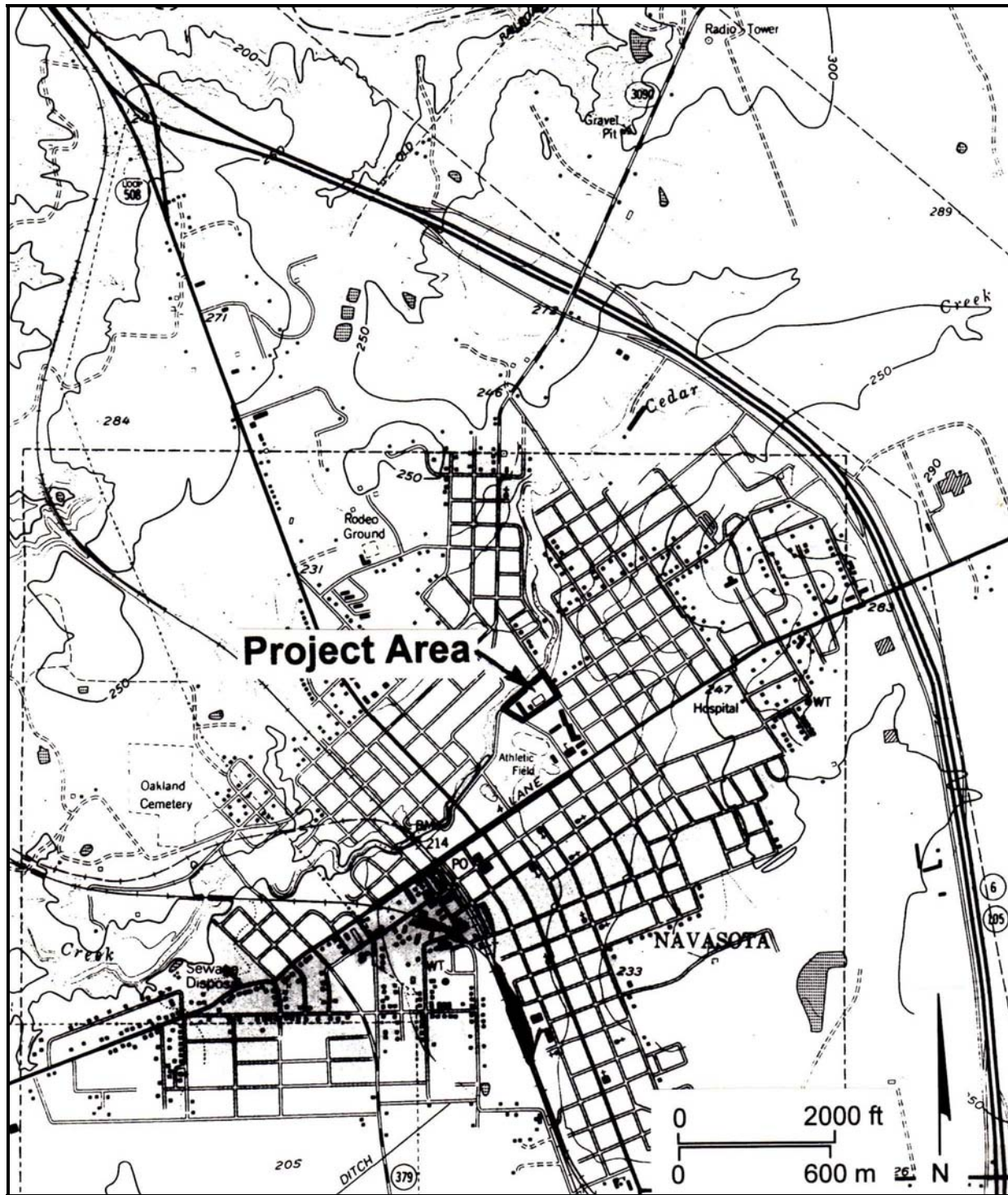


Figure 3. Project Area on Topographic Quadrangle

PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS

The vast majority of cultural resource work in Grimes County was undertaken in rural areas where historic sites found usually consist of isolated houses, farmsteads, and associated features. One exception is the work at Fanthorp Inn (41GM79) in Anderson, an early 19th century residence, Inn, and Stagecoach stop by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in 1982 (Ing and Hart 1987). Previous archaeological work in the county is discussed in several reports by various contractors. The most notable project undertaken in Grimes County (and the first major archaeological investigation in the area) was the Millican Project, Navasota River Basin in Brazos, Grimes, Leon, Madison, and Robertson counties (Sorrow and Cox 1973). The majority of work was centered on Brazos and Grimes counties. Later work in the area was carried out by Prewitt (1974), Prewitt and Dibble (1974), and Kotter (1982). To the north of the current project area lies the Texas Municipal Power Agency (TMPA), Gibbons Creek Mine Areas. These areas have been intensively examined by archaeologists beginning in the 1970s and lasting through at least 1994. Numerous archaeological sites (prehistoric and historic) were recorded, and a significant number were tested. A review of the archaeological literature revealed several significant investigations conducted on TMPA property.

In 1976, the first archaeological survey on Texas Municipal Power Agency (TMPA) property was conducted. This examination, performed by Texas A&M University (Bond 1977) looked at three tracts of land and recorded sites to the north (north of Highway 30) south, and east of the current project area. Shovel testing was not conducted and the authors cite the heavy vegetation as a hindrance to their survey. The nearest sites to the current project area are 41GM50 and 41GM51. Both of these sites contained a paucity of artifacts, and further work was not recommended. An archaeological bibliography of reports documenting work at TMPA is provided as Appendix III to this report.

Other smaller cultural resource studies have been carried out in the county, but not one examined as much territory or examined as many sites as the Millican River Basin endeavor. The interested reader is referred to the three reports mentioned above for detailed information concerning this project. Additional reports regarding the prehistory and history of Grimes County can be found in the libraries at TARL and the Texas Historical Commission, Archeology Division.

FIELD METHODS

Fieldwork was conducted on April 10, 2002 by William E. Moore (Principal Investigator), Roger G. Moore (Project Archaeologist), and Lili Lyddon (Photographer). The area examined consists of a three acre tract overlooking Cedar Creek to the northwest. On this tract are two historic buildings constructed by New Deal work projects in the 1930s, and they were the focus of this investigation. Five shovel tests were manually excavated in those areas believed to contain undisturbed or minimally disturbed soils. In the field it was noted that the landscape varied between apparently undisturbed soils and areas that had been artificially altered by excavation or other forms of soil removal. Since one of the New Deal era rock walls is located on a lower area beneath the Bath House, it became obvious that the excavation of soils in this area had been done at or prior to the 1930s. The excavated areas are depicted on the Project Area map (Figure 2). The location of the five tests is depicted in Figure 2, and other shovel test data are presented in Appendix IV. The project area is situated on an elevated landform above the floodplain of Cedar Creek, and it was difficult to ascertain if the buildings and pool were constructed on fill or on undisturbed soils. The shovel tests were excavated to help solve this mystery and to recover artifacts that may be the remains of earlier sites, prehistoric or historic, that may be present. All excavated earth was passed through 1/4 inch hardware cloth. It should be noted that shovel test locations were selected for their lack of imported materials and surface obstructions such as dense road metal deposits (here, gravel) and asphalt. This was especially true for the area in front of the Band Hall (41GM407). Artifacts recovered were examined in the field. Shovel tests 1 and 5 were dug between the Band Hall and Bath House in an area that is believed to represent the natural ground surface (Figure 2), although Shovel Test 5 was dug through a very fine sand that appears to be fill over the original surface. Tests 2-4 were dug in front of the Band Hall in an area that has been shallowly excavated (approximately 30 cm) sometime in the past (Figure 2).

Since not one of the artifacts found during shovel testing possesses historical, cultural, or scientific value they were discarded (see *Results and Conclusions* below). A digital camera was used to take elevation photographs of the two buildings. Finally, the Principal Investigator and Project Archaeologist met with local informants who provided information about the structures and information regarding the governmental agencies responsible for their construction. The Band Hall and Bath House and Pool were assigned the temporary numbers TS-1 and TS-2 and recorded at TARL as sites 41GM407 and 41GM408 respectively.

A major part of this project was the archival research conducted in the City of Navasota. At the High School, sources reviewed include the school newspaper, *The LaSalle*; the High School Yearbook, *The Rattler*; Grimes County histories, *The Navasota Bluebonnet* (Grimes County Chamber of Commerce 1954); *Heritage and Progress: History of Grimes County* (Grimes County Historical Commission 1982); and *Reflections of Grimes County, Texas 1994* (Whitten 1994). This aspect of the project was made possible by the cooperation of local residents and agencies (see *Acknowledgments* above).

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

A check of the site files and topographic maps at TARL revealed no previously recorded sites in the project area. This investigation covered a three acre tract. No additional sites were found through shovel testing. Two historic structures are present in the project area. These are the Band Hall located at 200 Brule Street (41GM407), and the Bath House and Pool located at 302 Brule Street (41GM408).

As stated above, the two historic buildings in the project area are part of a greater New Deal era public works landscape created in the 1930s when they and other architectural features were constructed. In addition to sites 41GM407 and 41GM408, public works projects were responsible for the construction of the football stadium (1934), the gymnasium (1934), a small out building (currently a pump house) that was located at the site of the rock crusher for construction of the buildings and other features and several rock walls associated with these facilities. Also, three bridges crossing Cedar Creek and associated stone walls were likewise constructed; however, it is not known at this time if they were part of the High School campus project. According to a plaque on the High School, this building was constructed in 1930 prior to the New Deal sponsored projects. The City Manager at that time was Robert Joe Brule. At one time Cedar Creek flowed through the area where the football stadium is now located. It is believed that one of the local New Deal projects was to channelize and straighten the creek. According to the high school newspaper, *The LaSalle* (XIII, Number 11, Page 1, March 30, 1934), the Civil Works Administration (CWA), is given credit for constructing the football stadium and early work on the gymnasium that was completed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

The CWA was a short-lived agency that was in existence from November 8, 1933 to April 1934. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) that officially began on May 6, 1935 replaced it. The WPA changed its name to the Work Projects Administration on July 1, 1939. The Public Works Administration (PWA), established in 1933, continued until 1940.

Band Hall (41GM407)

A bond issue of \$10,000 was passed in 1935 for the purpose of constructing a new school building (Grimes County Historical Commission 1982:150). The Band Hall was designed by Robert Joe Brule and constructed from native rock obtained near Anderson. The WPA provided Labor, and construction took 10 months, utilizing a work force of some 30 local men. School Superintendent J. L. Southerland applied for and received affiliation (equivalent to today's accreditation) after completion of the building.

According to Charles Allphin (Class of 1949), the Band Hall was built as part of a government program called the National Youth Administration (NYA), and the building was known as the "NYA Building" for many years by students and faculty. This federal agency was established in 1935 within the Works Progress Administration. Its purpose at first was obtaining part-time work for unemployed youths. As war approached, its emphasis was shifted to training youths for work. Its activities ceased in 1943. The role of this agency as it related to this building is not known at this time. During the 1940s there was no floor, and it was used as a storage area for paper drives during the War.

According to Muriel Moody Bingham (Class of 1945), band students were in another building at that time. Based on a photograph in the Grimes County History (Grimes County Historical Commission 1982:155), the band is depicted in back of the south end of the Band Hall in 1949, and the assumption is made that this structure housed the band at that time. According to a photograph in the high school annual, *The Rattler* (Rattler Annual Staff 1950-1951), the north end of the Band Hall was used as an agricultural classroom. This picture shows the rock wall on the inside, evidence that the inside has been remodeled since that time. Additional evidence of change to this building is found in a photograph in the 1951 *Rattler* that shows the original door on the southeast. Figure 6 in Appendix I depicts the modern entrance.

Bath House and Pool (41GM408)

In 1935, work resumed on the swimming pool [and Bath House?] by the WPA, according to high school newspaper, *The LaSalle*, Volume XV, Number 5, Page 1, December 11, 1935. Earlier (last year) work had been carried out under another federal agency, the Public Works Administration (PWA). According to this article, City Manager Robert Joe Brule stated that "swimming pool would be completed in 4 months" or early 1936. The PWA was established as part of the New Deal in 1933 in an effort to promote and stabilize employment and purchasing power. It administered the construction of various public works such as public buildings, bridges, dams, and housing developments.

Shovel Testing

Shovel testing did not identify the presence of additional sites; however, seven artifacts which were determined in the field to lack historical, cultural, or scientific value were recovered. They consist of a small whiteware fragment with no maker's mark, a green bottle glass fragment, a clear glass fragment (unidentified), a frosted glass fragment, a high-fired brick fragment, a piece of metal wire, and an unidentifiable metal fragment. These objects represent discarded trash and are probably not associated with either of the historic structures.

The shovel tests also revealed a varied landscape that appears to contain fill in certain areas over undisturbed soils. The five tests were excavated to a depth greater than 12 inches, the limit of subsurface disturbance according to David R. Pippin, Director of Parks and Recreation in a personal communication to William E. Moore on April 9, 2002.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Band Hall (41GM407) is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is recommended that any modifications to this structure by the City of Navasota strictly adhere to the guidelines as set forth by the Texas Historical Commission, History Programs Division. The Bath House (41GB408) is not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is recommended that modifications to this structure by the City of Navasota be allowed to proceed as planned.

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APPENDIX I

PHOTOGRAPHS OF BAND HALL (41GM407)



Figure 1. Front of Building



Figure 2. Corner of Building

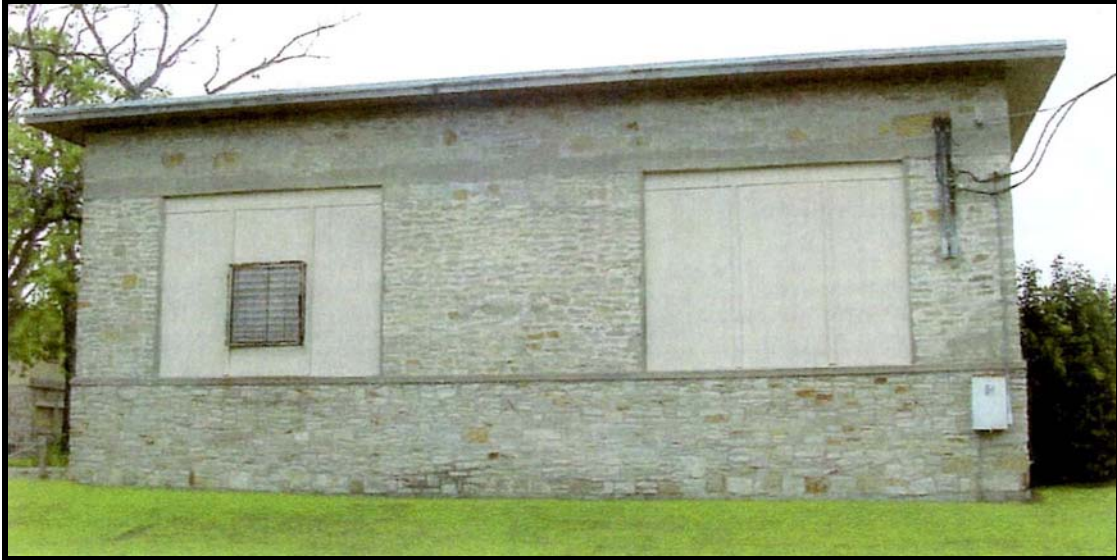


Figure 3. Side of Building

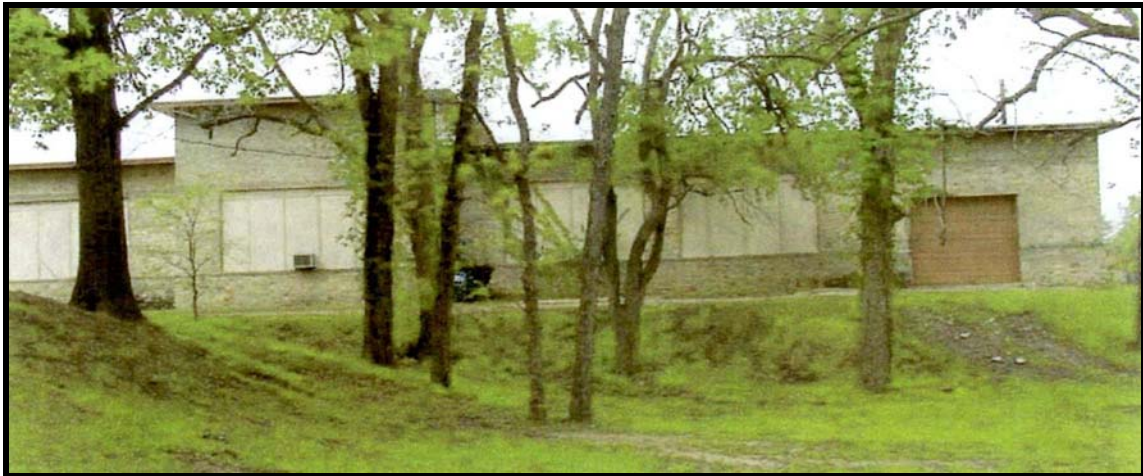


Figure 4. Back of Building



Figure 5. Corner (view from back of building)

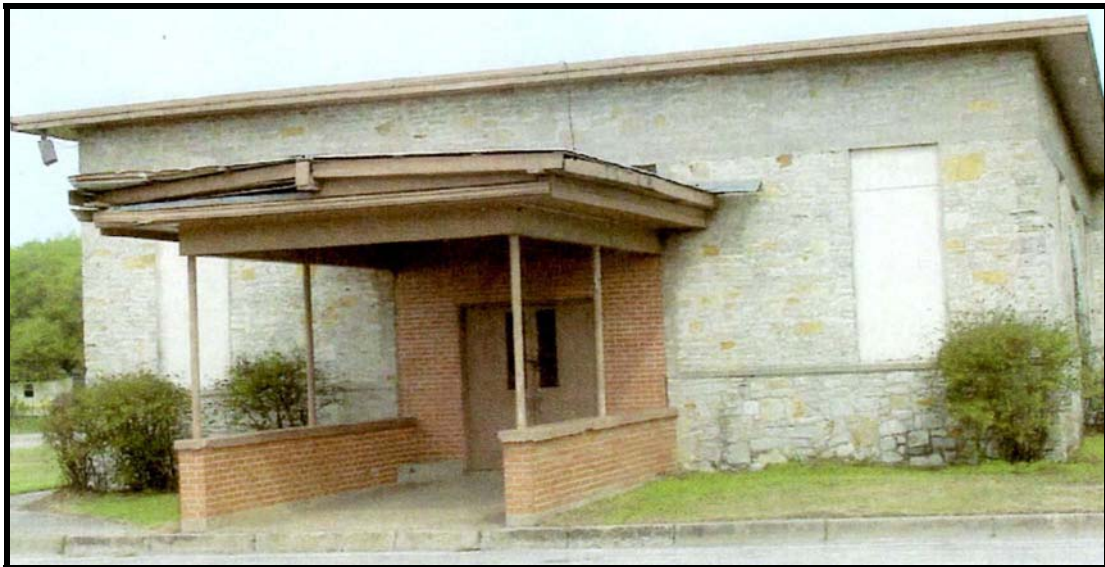


Figure 6. Side of Building Depicting Modern Entrance



Figure 7. Detail of Construction (front elevation)



Figure 8. Boot Scraper

APPENDIX II

PHOTOGRAPHS OF BATH HOUSE (41GM408)



Figure 1. Front Elevation (west side of building)

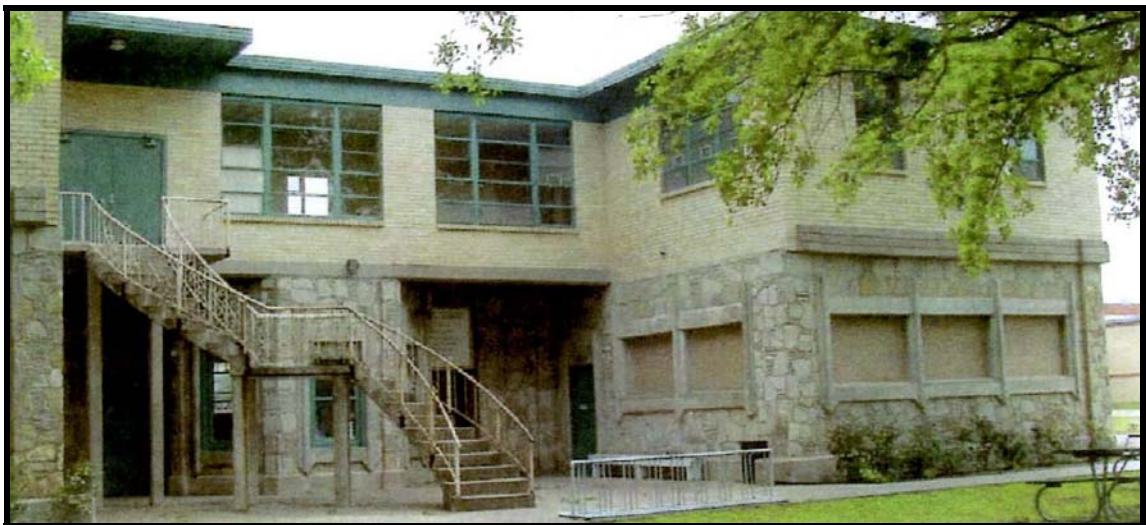


Figure 2. Front Elevation (east side of building)



Figure 3. Side of Building (view to Southeast)

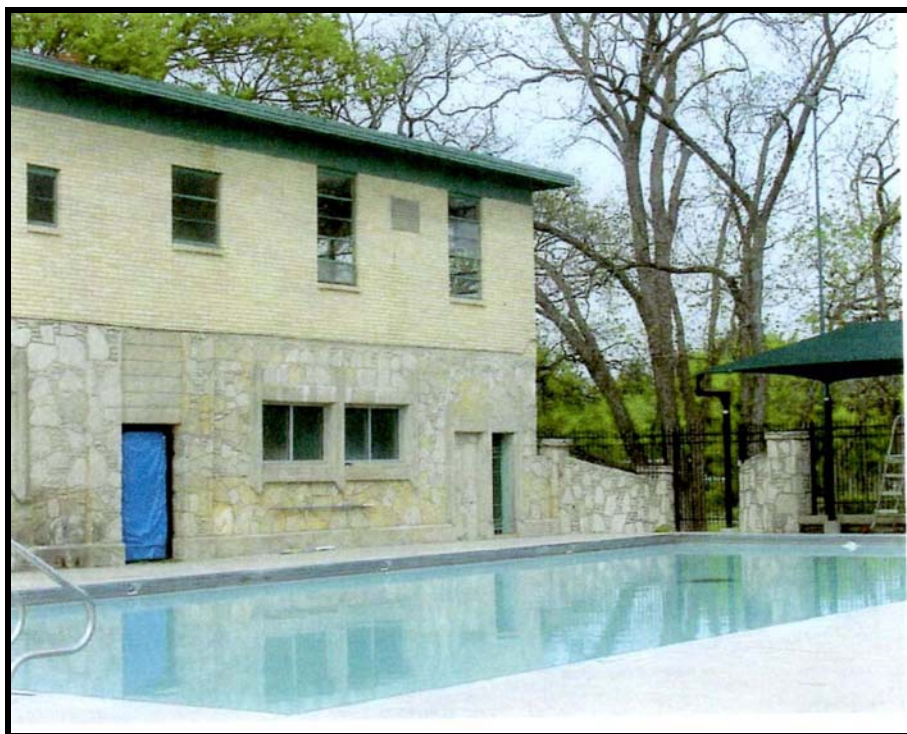


Figure 4. Back of Building

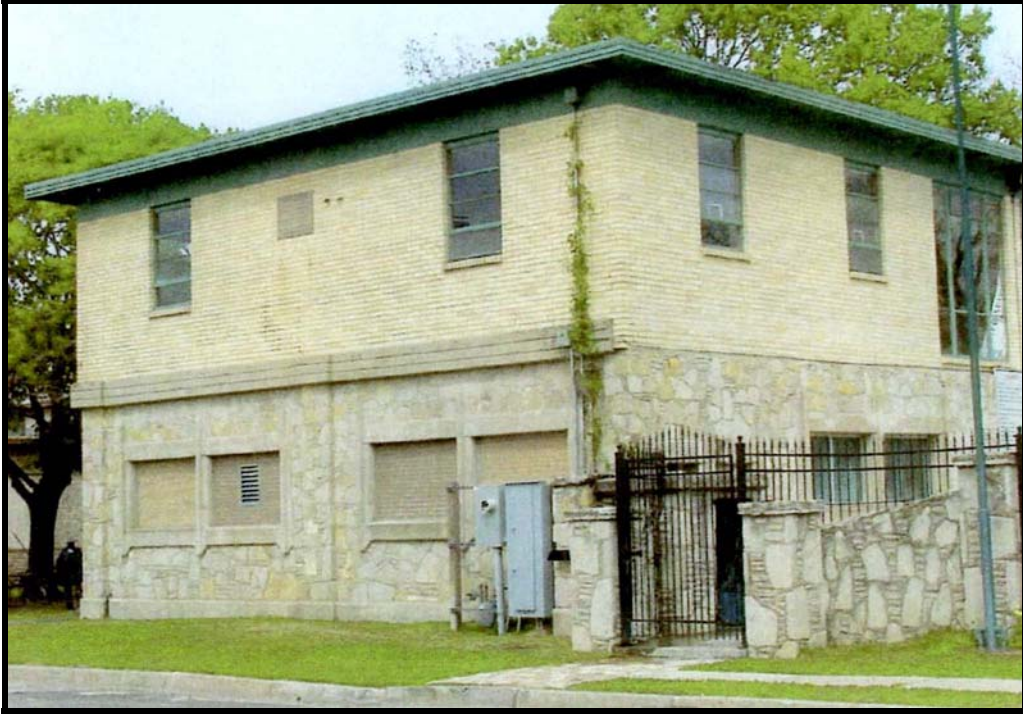


Figure 5. Corner of Building (view to Northwest)

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APPENDIX IV: SHOVEL TEST LOG

Test	Depth	Description
01	60 cm	sandy loam with lots of small pebbles and roots (sterile)
02	50 cm	sandy clay with many gravels; dug to caliche; 1 whiteware fragment
03	20 cm	sandy clay with sandstone pieces; dug to clay; 1 green bottle glass fragment, 1 clear glass fragment, 1 frosted glass fragment
04	70 cm	imported fill sand from 0-40 cm; undisturbed soil from 40-70 cm; dug to clay; 1 high-fired brick fragment, 1 piece of metal wire
05	20 cm	fill sand from 0-15 cm; undisturbed soil from 15-20 cm; dug to clay (sterile)